

VZCZCXRO7451
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHPS #0017/01 0150934
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 150934Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8732
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1102
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1587
RHFMISS/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUZEJAA/USNIC PRISTINA SR PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000017

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, INL, EUR/SCE
NSC FOR HELGERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KV](#) [UNMIK](#)
SUBJECT: KOSOVO: MODERATE SERBS BLAME NORTHERN HARDLINERS
FOR RECENT VIOLENCE

Classified By: Ambassador Tina S. Kaidanow for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Certain key moderates in Kosovo's Serb community, such as Rada Trajkovic, director of the Serbian government health clinic in the southern enclave of Gracanica, and Oliver Ivanovic, a fellow Kosovo Serb serving as State Secretary in the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo, are blaming hardline Serbs for the recent string of violent incidents in the ethnically-divided town of Mitrovica in northern Kosovo. Along the same lines, Ivanovic publicly accused northern hardline leaders Marko Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic of misusing their positions as directors of the Serbian government hospital in northern Mitrovica by preventing French General Michel Yakovleff, commander of KFOR's Multinational Task Force North (MNTF-N), from visiting firefighters recuperating in the hospital from wounds received during the violence. Ivanovic told the Embassy he will try to convince Serbian President Boris Tadic to remove the pair from their official positions, but said that assistance -- in the form of direct evidence that hardline Serbs had been the culprits in the riots -- from EULEX and KFOR would be welcome. We agree that effective action and coordination among KFOR, EULEX, and the Kosovo Police is vital to maintain Mitrovica's stability. END SUMMARY.

Trajkovic and Ivanovic hold Serbs responsible for violence

12. (C) On December 30, the stabbing of a Kosovo Serb youth by two Albanians under unclear circumstances in the ethnically-mixed Three Towers neighborhood of north Mitrovica sparked riots and exchanges of gunfire, followed by more riots and the burning of Albanian shops on January 2 in Bosniak Mahalla, another mixed neighborhood in the north. While northern Serb hardliners not unexpectedly blamed Kosovo Albanians for the violence, two influential moderates have publicly said that Serbs hold primary responsibility. On January 4, Serbian Ministry for Kosovo State Secretary Oliver Ivanovic told Emboff that "we (Kosovo Serbs) are to blame for this because we have not replaced some people as quickly as we should have," a charge he repeated publicly on January 5. That same day, Rada Trajkovic, a Kosovo Serb leader from the enclave of Gracanica, told Serbia-based FONET agency that in condemning the violence, Serbian Minister for Kosovo Goran Bogdanovic failed to mention that Serbs were responsible for the January 2 violence in which a grenade exploded, wounding six Serb firefighters fighting a blaze resulting from earlier

rioting. Trajkovic went on to say on January 8 that it was completely clear that "Serb extremists" had been involved in the attack, maintaining that she had received phone calls from Serbs in north Mitrovica confirming her claims. Both Ivanovic and Trajkovic also made thinly-veiled attacks against northern hardline leaders Marko Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic, who serve as directors of the Serbian government hospital in north Mitrovica.

Yakovleff Refused Entry

¶3. (C) Subsequent to the January 2 violence, MNTF-N Commander Michel Yakovleff, along with EULEX Police Commissioner Rainer Kuehn, attempted to visit the wounded firefighters in the north Mitrovica hospital, but were denied entry. This incident garnered widespread media coverage, which intensified on January 6 when Oliver Ivanovic called again for the replacement of Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic for misuse of their state positions in refusing Yakovleff entry to the hospital on a day when many others, including Bogdanovic, had visited the facility. (Note: MNTF-N responded firmly to this, publicly demanding an explanation. End Note.) On January 10, Ivanovic told us he had been quick to jump on the situation, explaining that he would use any ammunition at his disposal to combat Jaksic and Milan Ivanovic.

Sustaining the Effort

¶4. (C) What remains unclear, however, is what influence if any Ivanovic has with the Foreign Ministry hierarchy running

PRISTINA 00000017 002 OF 002

Kosovo policy in Belgrade. Ivanovic told us that he would seek, as soon as possible, an audience with Serbian President Boris Tadic to urge him to remove Jaksic and (Milan) Ivanovic from their Serbian government positions, further limiting their influence. As he has in recent months, he also said that the pair should be charged with embezzlement and theft of Serbian government funds under their control over the past nine years and either be imprisoned or made to leave Kosovo. He asked us for assistance in convincing EULEX and KFOR to send the same message to Tadic, i.e., that Jaksic and Ivanovic were simply too troublesome and had to be dealt with. He went on to say that an official EULEX or KFOR report showing that the two were somehow culpable in recent violent events would also be helpful.

KFOR Responsive, EULEX "needs firmer hand"

¶5. (C) Ivanovic said he had been in touch with KFOR since the disturbances started on December 30, and was satisfied with KFOR's rapid response. He noted the numerous KFOR checkpoints in north Mitrovica, praising them as a "visible presence," which he considers the only way to keep the situation calm. (Note: In traveling to Ivanovic's office on January 10 we noted three large checkpoints on our short route through north Mitrovica to our meeting point, as well as the considerable damage sustained by ethnic Albanian property owners. End Note.) However, he warned that unless neutralized, Jaksic, Milan Ivanovic, and their hardline followers would probably find more pretexts for violence in the future. Asked whether EULEX had been responsive, Ivanovic expressed some disappointment, saying that EULEX was not as visible as KFOR. He added that the Kosovo Police - monitored and mentored by EULEX (and made up of exclusively Serbs in north Mitrovica) - was "unreliable," requiring a firmer hand to be effective in combating inter-ethnic violence.

Comment: Hardliners Remain a Problem, Effective Coordination by KFOR and EULEX Essential

¶6. (C) The violence in Mitrovica is evidence that Serb hardliners will not easily stand down; their actions were, more than anything, aimed at broadcasting to Belgrade and the

international community that they remain a force to be reckoned with. Effective coordination and resolute action by EULEX and KFOR will be necessary to keep the hardliners in check. Belgrade's role in the north remains murky. Ivanovic -- who blows hot and cold in terms of his rhetoric -- clearly can't stand the northern leadership (he himself hails from Kosovo's north and has had a traditional rivalry with Marko and Milan), but whether his exhortations against them presage any kind of organized Belgrade effort to remove them from their positions of influence is more doubtful. End comment.

KAIDANOW